

(19)



Europäisches Patentamt
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(11) Publication number:

0 654 628 A1

(12)

EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

(21) Application number: 94118318.8

(51) Int. Cl.⁶ **F16K 31/62, F16K 31/385**

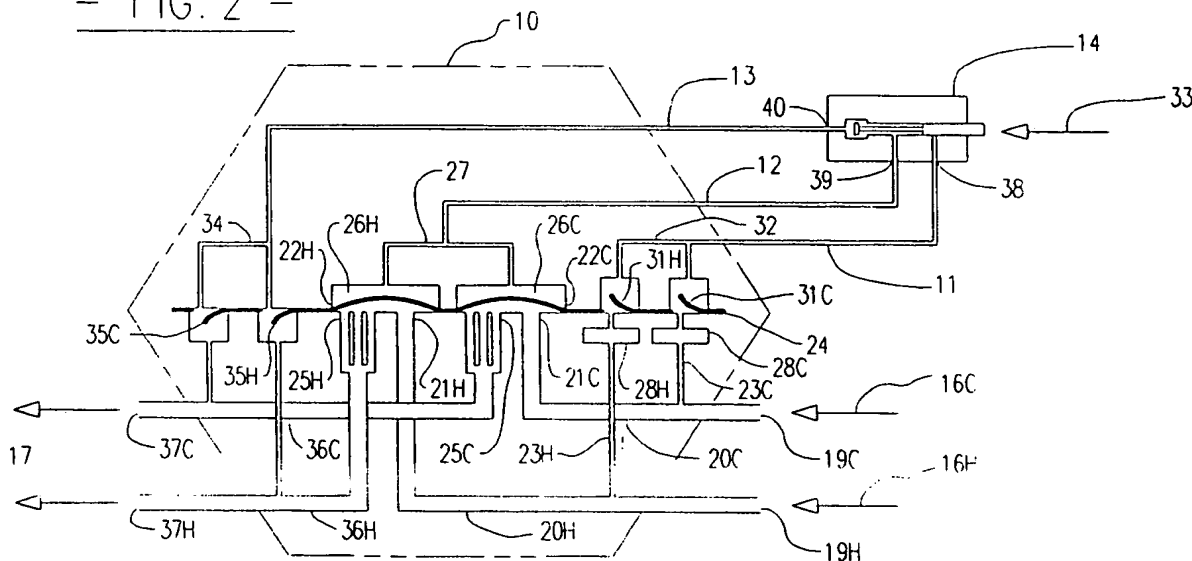
(22) Date of filing: 21.11.94

(30) Priority: 22.11.93 CA 2109684

(43) Date of publication of application:
24.05.95 Bulletin 95/21(84) Designated Contracting States:
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D-80538 München (DE)(54) **Faucet control device.**

(57) A faucet control device to provide asepsis and conservation of water consisting of a diaphragm valve block (10) connected inline between the hot and cold water supply (16C,16H) and faucet (17). Pilot hot and cold water pressure (23H,23C) from said valve block is routed through three flexible

conduit (11,12,13) assemblies to a three-way valve (14) remotely located to facilitate operation by knee, foot or elbow. The application of force to the three way valves cycles the diaphragm valve block from the closed to open position while preventing cross-flow between the hot and cold water supplies.

- FIG. 2 -**EP 0 654 628 A1**

This invention relates to the control of cold and hot water flowing through a faucet by a method other than hand operation.

It has been amply demonstrated by a variety of studies and research that conventional hand operated faucets are a source of wasted water and energy and a cross contamination point for the spread of infectious diseases. Several devices have been developed and marketed to overcome these problems but all have some disadvantages. Mechanical foot pedal or knee operated faucets are expensive and often require extensive and costly modifications to plumbing and cabinetry. Infra-red sensor electrically operated faucets are costly to install, require an electrical outlet, may be erratic in operation and may permit cold and hot water cross flow. Foot pedal valves controlling the application of air pressure to water controlling valves are expensive and often difficult to install and require a compressed air source. Some devices attach to the spout of the faucet and although easily installed, they connect the cold and hot water supplies together, thereby permitting cross flow between them. Of these, ultrasound sensor electrically operated valves require batteries and are too bulky to comfortably adapt to many faucets. Other types operate by a foot control supplying fluid pressure through flexible tubings connected to a spout mounted valve. These tend to be untidy and cumbersome to operate. Examples of such devices are described and illustrated in United States Patent No. 5,029,806, dated July 9, 1991 granted to Chung for a "Foot-Controlled Water Faucet"; in United States Patent No. 4,052,035, dated October 4, 1977, granted to Kenny and Armstrong for a "Remotely-Controlled Valve" and in United States Patent No. 3,536,294, dated October 27, 1970, granted to Rodrigues for a "Foot-Operated Control Valve Attachment Device for Water Faucets".

It is desirable to have a water control device which employs supply water pressure for control, is easily installed, simple in construction, reliable, economical and has the ability to convert existing hot and cold water outlets of any style, in any facility to other than hand operation. The present invention, now provides a water outlet control assembly which substantially overcomes the disadvantages of the aforementioned devices.

Accordingly the present invention provides a water outlet control assembly for control of water flow to a water outlet such as a faucet or spout by other than hand operation. The control assembly includes a control block connected between a pressurized water source preferably a hot water and a cold water source and the control block managing the flow of pressurized water to the water outlet depending on a pilot water pressure supplied thereto, and a pilot pressure control means con-

nected to the control block by appropriate conduits, whereby the pilot pressure control means is selectively operable for example by a knee, foot or elbow.

In the preferred embodiment of the control block, hot and cold water flow is respectively controlled by a diaphragm gate valve preferably constructed similar to the one disclosed in United States Patent No. 3,638,310 issued February 1, 1972, to Austin for a "Dental Handpiece Control" and used in the control of air and water in dental drilling equipment. In the preferred embodiment a three way valve is associated with the control block and the application of pressurized pilot or operating water concurrently to the chambers of the diaphragm gate valves closes the valves and blocks cold and hot water from flowing to the water outlet. The operation of the three-way valve allows the pilot water pressure to vent to atmosphere from the chambers of the diaphragm gate valves by way of the water outlet whereby hot and cold water are allowed to pass through to the water outlet.

In another preferred aspect of the invention, pilot water pressure is supplied within the control block from upstream of the diaphragm gate valves and combined from both the cold and hot water sources to assure closure of the diaphragm gate valves.

In a further preferred aspect of the invention pilot water pressure is vented into both main hot and cold water outlet ports of the control block to assure opening of the diaphragm gate valves provided that either the hot or cold valve of the faucet is set open.

In still another preferred aspect of the invention, the control block features a pair of one-way valves respectively located in the pilot water supply path from the main cold and hot water inlet ports of the control block to prevent cross flow between the cold and hot water pressurized sources.

In yet another preferred aspect of the invention, the control block features a pair of one way valves respectively located in the pilot water exhaust path leading to the main cold and hot water outlet ports of the control block to prevent water cross flow between them.

In still a further preferred aspect of the invention the control block includes a plurality of outlet or inlet ports rather than a single port for each of the diaphragm gate valves to enhance their operation by distributing control circuit water pressure acting upon the diaphragm over several outlet or inlet orifices rather than one, thereby increasing the pressure and flow ratings of the valve.

In another preferred aspect of the invention the control block features filter elements respectively located in the pilot water supply path from the main cold and hot water inlet ports to prevent fouling of

the elements in the pilot water circuit by water born pollutants and debris.

Preferred embodiments of the invention will be described in the following with reference to the drawings in which:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of typical faucet, sink and cabinet arrangement incorporating the faucet control device;

Figure 2 is a schematic representation of the control assembly of the present invention;

Figure 3 is a perspective view of the diaphragm valve control block;

Figure 4 is an exploded perspective view of the diaphragm valve control block;

Figure 5 is a cross-section through a conventional three-way valve and a cross-section through the control block taken along Line 5.1 - 5.1 of Figure 3, representing either cold or hot flow path in the open position;

Figure 6 is a cross-section through a conventional three-way valve and three cross-sections through the control block, in the closed position, taken along Lines 6.1 - 6.1, 6.2 - 6.2 and 6.3 - 6.3 respectively of Figure 3 and

Figure 7 is an enlarged cross-section of another embodiment of a diaphragm gate valve of a control block in accordance with the invention.

Figure 1 shows the preferred embodiment of the faucet control assembly consisting of a control block 10, a flexible pilot water supply conduit 11, flexible pilot water exhaust conduits 12 and 13 and a three way valve 14 in a typical sink cabinet arrangement 15. The control block assembly 10 connects by known adapting conduits between a pressurized cold water source 16C, a pressurized hot water source 16H and a faucet 17. Flexible conduits 11, 12 and 13 connect the control block 10 to the three-way valve 14 which controls operation of the control block and is mounted in such a manner as to set the cabinet door 18 sufficiently ajar to permit operation of the three way valve 14 with the application of force to the cabinet door by a knee or leg.

Figure 2 shows schematically the control of the cold water 16C and hot water 16H supply by the preferred faucet control assembly. The elements of the cold water circuit which are identical in construction and interchangeable with those of the hot water circuit are accorded the same numerical references followed by the corresponding letter "C" or "H". Pressurized water from the pressurized water supplies 16C and 16H enter the control block 10 through main inlet ports 19C and 19H, and flows through manifolds 20C and 20H directly to inlet ports 21C and 21H of diaphragm gate valves 22C and 22H and pilot pressure ports 23C and 23H.

The control block assembly 10 as shown in figures 3 and 4 consists of a cover block 10A and a

main body 10B and when assembled they retain filter elements 28C and 28H, o-ring seals 29C and 29H, port washers 30C and 30H and a diaphragm 24 constructed of a flexibly resilient material, common to both diaphragm gate valves 22C and 22H (see also figure 2) and one way valves 31C, 31H, 35C and 35H.

As shown in Figures 2 and 6, in the closed position of the faucet control assembly hot and cold water flow through the control block 10 is blocked by the diaphragm 24 of diaphragm gate valves 22C and 22H when sufficient pilot or operating water pressure is delivered concurrently into respective pilot water chambers 26C and 26H of the diaphragm gate valves, thereby seating portions of the diaphragm against the inlet ports 21C and 21H and outlet ports 25C and 25H. In the open position of the faucet control assembly (see also figure 5), pilot water pressure in the pilot water chambers 26C and 26H is vented to atmosphere, thereby unseating the diaphragm. This permits water flow between the inlet and outlet ports 21C, 21H and 25C, 25H of both diaphragm gate valves 22C, 22H. Cold and hot water can then pass through manifolds 36C and 36H and main outlet ports 37C and 37H respectively and directed through onward by known conduits to the faucet 17.

As shown in Figures 2, 5 and 6 pilot water pressure is controlled by the three-way valve 14, in the first position of the three-way valve (see Figure 6), pilot water is supplied to a normally open port 34 of the three-way valve and routed through a common port 35 and the through flexible conduit 12, into a manifold port 27 from where it is diverted into the diaphragm pilot chambers 26C and 26H. Pilot water is delivered to the three-way valve from the control block 10 through pilot pressure ports 23C and 23H, filter elements 28C and 28H, port washers 30C and 30H and one way valves 29C and 29H. Cold and hot water is combined in a manifold port 32, and passes through the flexible conduit 11 to the three way valve 14.

In operation of the faucet control assembly, with reference to Figure 2 and 5, an externally applied force 33 urges the three way valve 14 to its second position venting pilot pressure from the pilot chambers 26C and 26H of diaphragm gate valves 22C and 22H into manifold port 27 through the flexible conduit 12 and the common port 39 of the three-way valve, out the normally closed port 40 through flexible conduit assembly 13 into manifold port 34 and through one way valves 35C and 35H output manifolds 36C and 36H and main outlet ports 37C and 37H (see also Figure 5) into the faucet 17. Thus the pilot water pressure is released to atmosphere, provided at least one valve in the faucet is set open.

In this embodiment the relative flow settings of hot and cold water valves in the typical faucet will not affect the operation of the faucet control assembly. Pilot water pressure is vented to atmosphere into either hot or cold or both portions of the faucet from the one way valves 35C and 35H. Both pairs of one way valves 31C and 31H and 35C and 35H respectively block cold and hot water cross-flow in the input and output portion respectively of the control block 10. The operation of the faucet control assembly is unaffected by variations in pressure between the hot and cold supply. The higher pressure will always be applied as the pilot pressure thereby assuring closure of the valve. Further, the incorporation of filter elements 28C and 28H in the initial pilot water flow path prevents fouling of control elements in the control block 10 and the valve 14 by water born pollutants and debris thereby reducing potential valve failure.

Various changes, adaptations and modifications may be made in the details of construction, design and layout of the above described embodiment of this invention without departing from the spirit thereof. These may include various mechanical arrangements so designed to operate the three-way valve by knee, foot or elbow, combined with various mechanical latching features for manual operation of the faucet or a push on or a push off feature. Also it may be desirable to divide the control block into separate cold and hot blocks to ease installation in some plumbing arrangements. In such an embodiment (not shown) the respective manifold ports of the separate control blocks are interconnected by appropriate conduits to the three-way valve. The control block may also be integrated in various embodiments directly into a faucet or shower assembly.

Further, it may be desirable, such as in an integrated faucet assembly to control the volume or rate of water flow through the diaphragm gate valves. This may be accomplished by a means which allows for adjusting volume of the chambers of the diaphragm gate valves thereby constricting the passage of water therethrough. One embodiment of such a means is shown in Figure 7. The chamber 26 of the diaphragm gate valve 22 is constructed in an appropriate manner to accommodate a plunger 50 moveable within the chamber and acting upon the diaphragm 24. An "O" ring 51 is used as a means to seal the chamber from atmosphere with the application of pilot water pressure through manifold port 27 wherein the diaphragm gate valve operates as previously described. The plunger is mechanically urged by an eccentric cam lever assembly 52 to various positions when a force 53 is applied thereto variably constricting or stopping the flow of water between the inlet port 21 and outlet port 25 of the dia-

phragm gate valve.

It may also be desirable to use a two way valve in lieu of the three way valve 14 to vent pressure from the pilot chambers 26C and 26H of the diaphragm gate valves 22C and 22H. This can be accomplished with the addition of one or more orifices or constrictions placed in the flowpath of the pilot water circuit between the pressurized water supplies 16C and 16H and the chambers 26C and 26H of the diaphragm gate valves 22C and 22H. The use of an appropriate constriction (approximately .010 of a inch in diameter) creates a pressure differential between the supply pressures and atmosphere sufficient to unseat the diaphragm thereby permitting water flow through the diaphragm valve block.

It should be noted that the objects and advantages of the invention may be attained by means of any compatible combination(s) particularly pointed out in the items of the following summary of the invention and the appended claims.

The invention may be summarized as follows:

1. A control assembly for controlling the flow of water to a water outlet comprising: a control block having inlet means for receiving pressurized water from a pressurized water source, outlet means for discharging pressurized water to a water outlet, pilot water input means for receiving pilot water of controlled pressure, and a valve for controlling the flow of water from the pressurized water source through the control block and towards the water outlet, the valve being operated between open and closed positions by the pressure of the pilot water supplied thereto through the pilot water input means; a pilot pressure control means for selectively controlling the pressure of pilot water supplied to the pilot water input means, the pilot pressure control means having an intake means for receiving pressurized water from the pressurized water source, a discharge means for supplying pressurized pilot water to the pilot water input means, and actuator means for selectively operating the valve between a first position wherein pressurized water is supplied to the input means and a second position wherein pressure of the pilot water present in the discharge means and, thus, the input means is released.
2. A control assembly particularly as defined in 1. wherein the control block has first and second inlet means for respectively receiving hot and cold pressurized water from separate hot and cold pressurized water sources, first and second outlet means for respectively discharging pressurized hot and cold water to the water outlet,

and first and second valves for respectively controlling the flow of hot and cold water from the hot and cold pressurized water sources through the control block and towards the water outlet, the first and second valves being simultaneously operated between open and closed positions by the pressure of the pilot water supplied thereto through the pilot water input means, the pilot water being supplied to the pilot pressure means from at least one of the hot and cold pressurized water sources.

3. A control assembly particularly as defined in 1, wherein the water outlet includes valve means for controlling the flow of water discharged from the outlet.

4. A control assembly as defined in claim 2, wherein the water outlet includes first and second valve means for respectively controlling the flow of hot and cold water discharged from the outlet.

5. A control assembly particularly as defined in 1, wherein pilot water pressure is supplied to the pilot pressure control means from both the hot and cold pressurized water sources.

6. A control assembly particularly as defined in 2, wherein the pressure of the pilot water present in the discharge means and the input means is released into a least one of the first and second outlet means.

7. A control assembly particularly as defined in 3, wherein the control block, the water outlet and the valve means are combined into one control unit.

8. A control assembly particularly as defined in 4, wherein the control block, the water outlet and the first and second valve means are combined into one control unit.

9. A control assembly particularly as defined in 5, wherein the control block further includes a pair of one way valves respectively positioned upstream the pilot water input means to prevent cross-flow between the hot and cold pressurized water sources.

10. A control assembly particularly as defined in 1, wherein the control block further includes a filter means for preventing fouling of elements subjected to the pilot water by water born pollutants and debris.

11. A control assembly particularly as defined in 2, wherein the control block further includes a filter means for respectively preventing fouling of elements subjected to the pilot water by water born pollutants and debris.

12. A control assembly particularly as defined in 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9 or 10, wherein the valve of the control block is a conventional diaphragm valve.

13. A control assembly particularly as defined in 2, 4, 6, 8 or 11, wherein the valve of the control

block is a conventional diaphragm valve.

14. A control assembly particularly as defined in 12, wherein the pilot pressure control means is a three way valve.

15. A control assembly particularly as defined in 13, wherein the pilot pressure control means is a three way valve.

16. A control assembly particularly as defined in 12 or 13, wherein the water outlet is one of a water faucet and a shower faucet.

17. A control assembly particularly as defined in 1, wherein the control block is divided into separate hot and cold water control sections, the hot water control section having the first inlet means, the first outlet means and the first valve, and the cold water control means having the second inlet means, the second outlet means and the second valve.

Claims

1. A control assembly for controlling the flow of water to a water outlet comprising: a control block having inlet means for receiving pressurized water from a pressurized water source, outlet means for discharging pressurized water to a water outlet, pilot water input means for receiving pilot water of controlled pressure, and a valve for controlling the flow of water from the pressurized water source through the control block and towards the water outlet, the valve being operated between open and closed positions by the pressure of the pilot water supplied thereto through the pilot water input means; a pilot pressure control means for selectively controlling the pressure of pilot water supplied to the pilot water input means, the pilot pressure control means having an intake means for receiving pressurized water from the pressurized water source, a discharge means for supplying pressurized pilot water to the pilot water input means, and actuator means for selectively operating the valve between a first position wherein pressurized water is supplied to the input means and a second position wherein pressure of the pilot water present in the discharge means and, thus, the input means is released.
2. A control assembly as defined in claim 1, wherein the control block has first and second inlet means for respectively receiving hot and cold pressurized water from separate hot and cold pressurized water sources, first and second outlet means for respectively discharging pressurized hot and cold water to the water outlet, and first and second valves for respec-

tively controlling the flow of hot and cold water from the hot and cold pressurized water sources through the control block and towards the water outlet, the first and second valves being simultaneously operated between open and closed positions by the pressure of the pilot water supplied thereto through the pilot water input means, the pilot water being supplied to the pilot pressure means from at least one of the hot and cold pressurized water sources.

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3. A control assembly as defined in claim 1, wherein the water outlet includes valve means for controlling the flow of water discharged from the outlet.

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4. A control assembly as defined in claim 2, wherein the water outlet includes first and second valve means for respectively controlling the flow of hot and cold water discharged from the outlet.

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5. A control assembly as defined in claim 1, wherein pilot water pressure is supplied to the pilot pressure control means from both the hot and cold pressurized water sources.

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6. A control assembly as defined in claim 2, wherein the pressure of the pilot water present in the discharge means and the input means is released into at least one of the first and second outlet means.

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7. A control assembly as defined in claim 3, wherein the control block, the water outlet and the valve means are combined into one control unit, said valve means preferably being first and second valve means.

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8. A control assembly as defined in claim 5, wherein the control block further includes a pair of one way valves respectively positioned upstream the pilot water input means to prevent cross-flow between the hot and cold pressurized water sources.

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9. A control assembly as defined in claim 1, wherein the control block further includes a filter means for preventing fouling of elements subjected to the pilot water by water born pollutants and debris.

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wherein preferably the control block further includes a filter means for respectively preventing fouling of elements subjected to the pilot water by water born pollutants and debris, wherein preferably the valve of the control block is a conventional diaphragm valve, wherein preferably the pilot pressure con-

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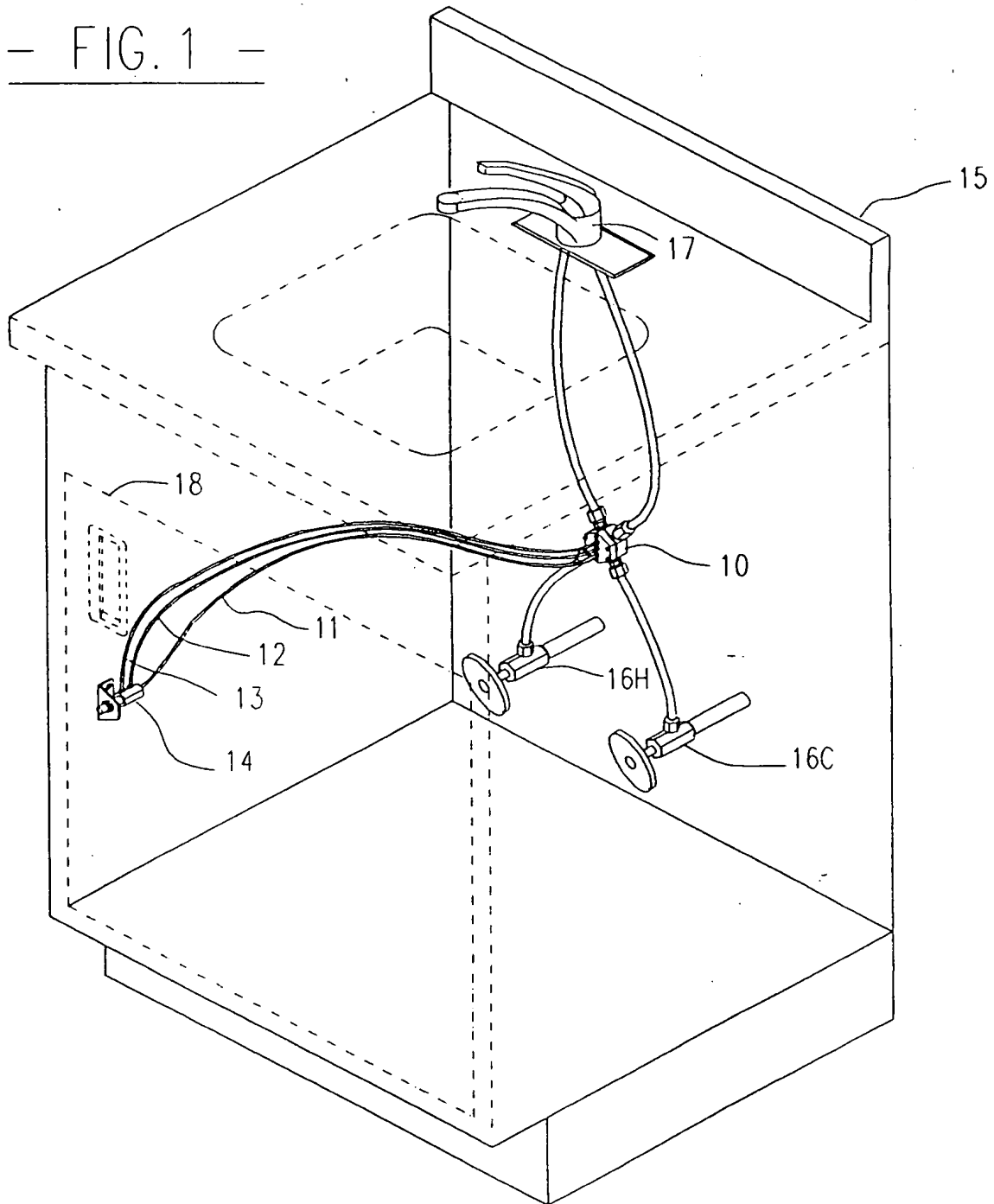
trol means is a three way valve,

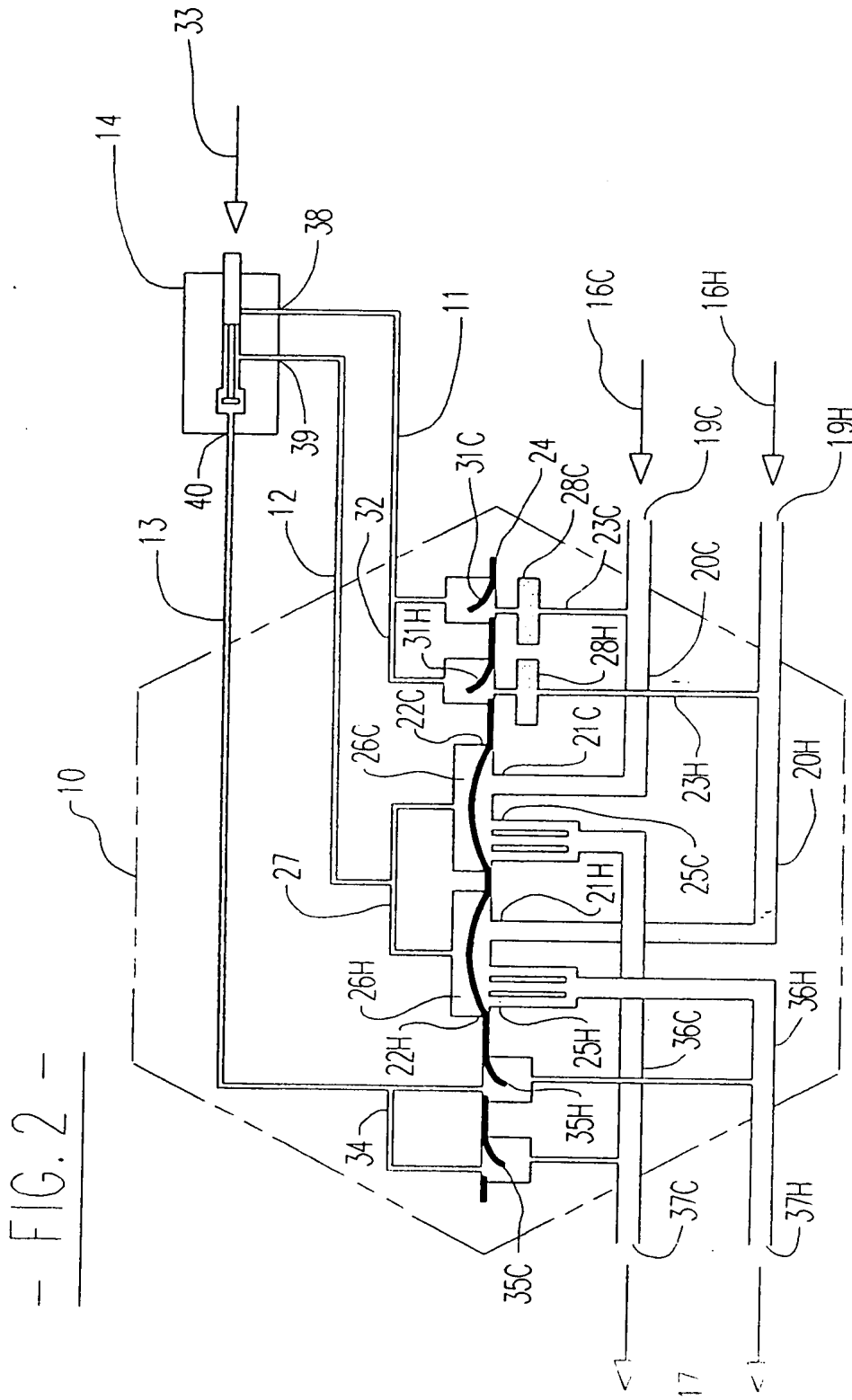
wherein preferably the water outlet is one of a water faucet and a shower faucet, and

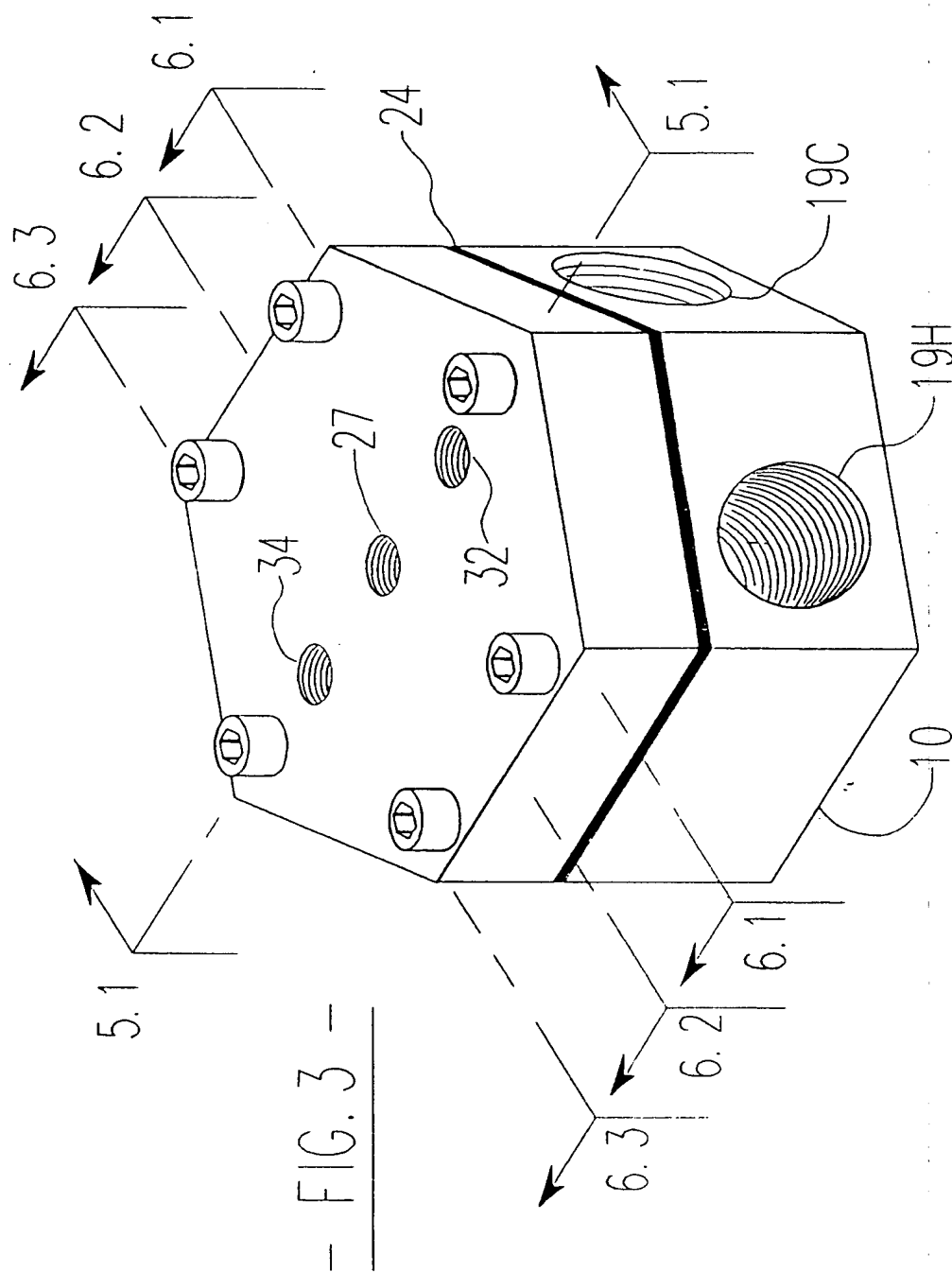
wherein preferably the control block is divided into separate hot and cold water control sections, the hot water control section having the first inlet means, the first outlet means and the first valve, and the cold water control means having the second inlet means, the second outlet means and the second valve.

10. A control assembly for controlling the flow of water to a water outlet comprising: a control block having inlet means for receiving pressurized water from a pressurized water source, outlet means for discharging pressurized water to a water outlet, pilot water input means for receiving pilot water of controlled pressure, and a valve for controlling the flow of water from the pressurized water source through the control block and towards the water outlet.

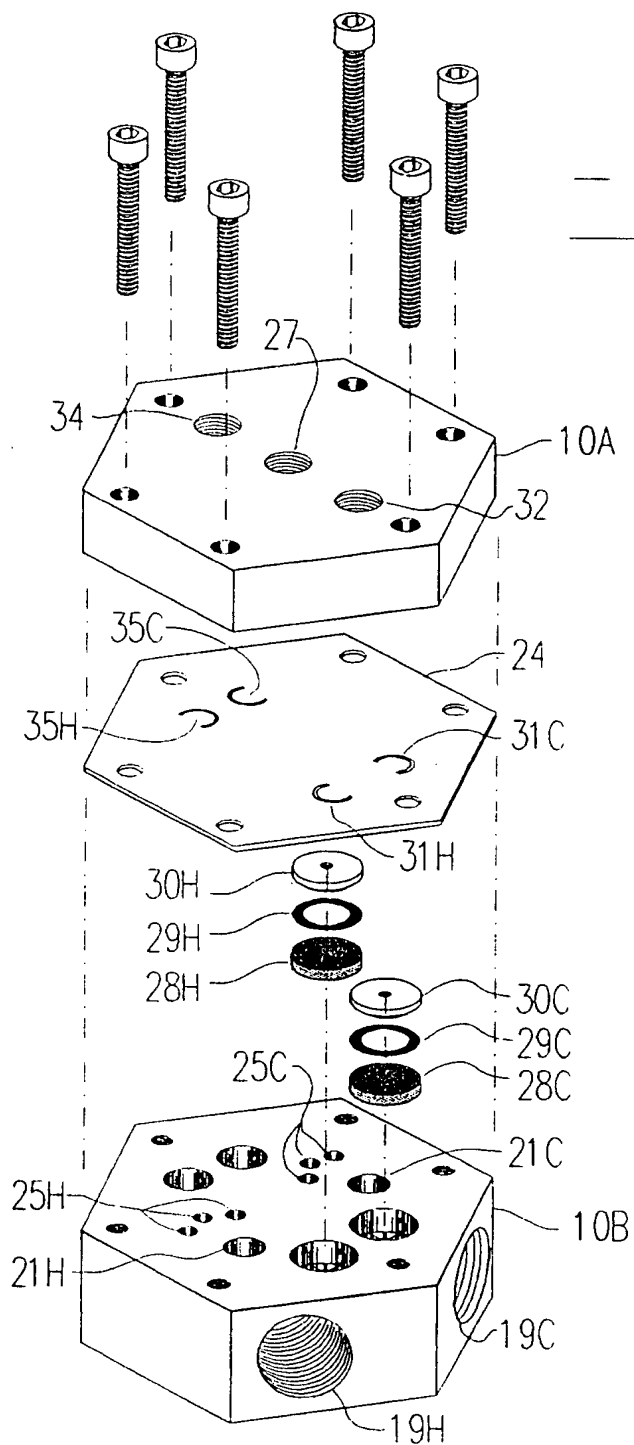
— FIG. 1 —

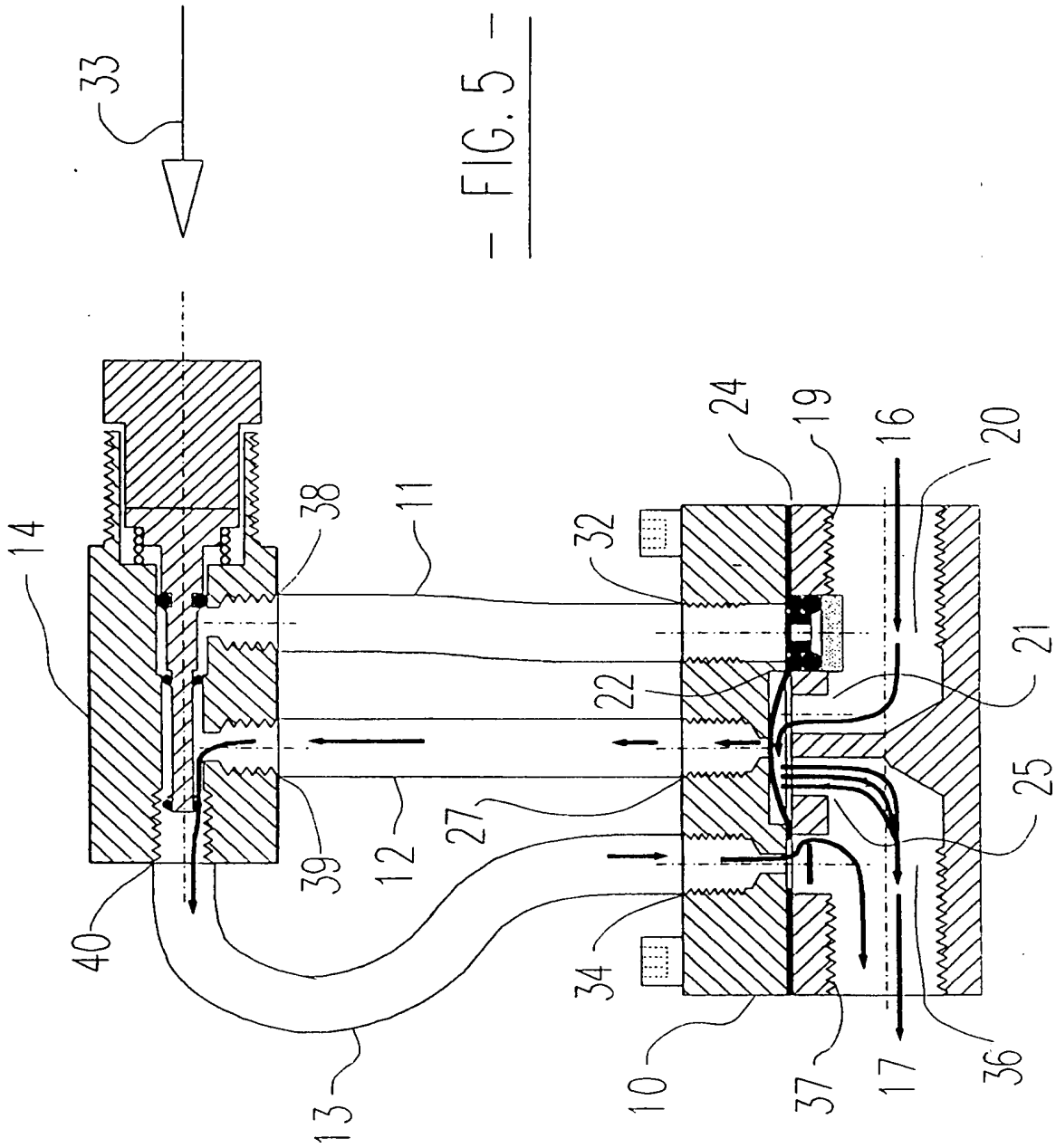






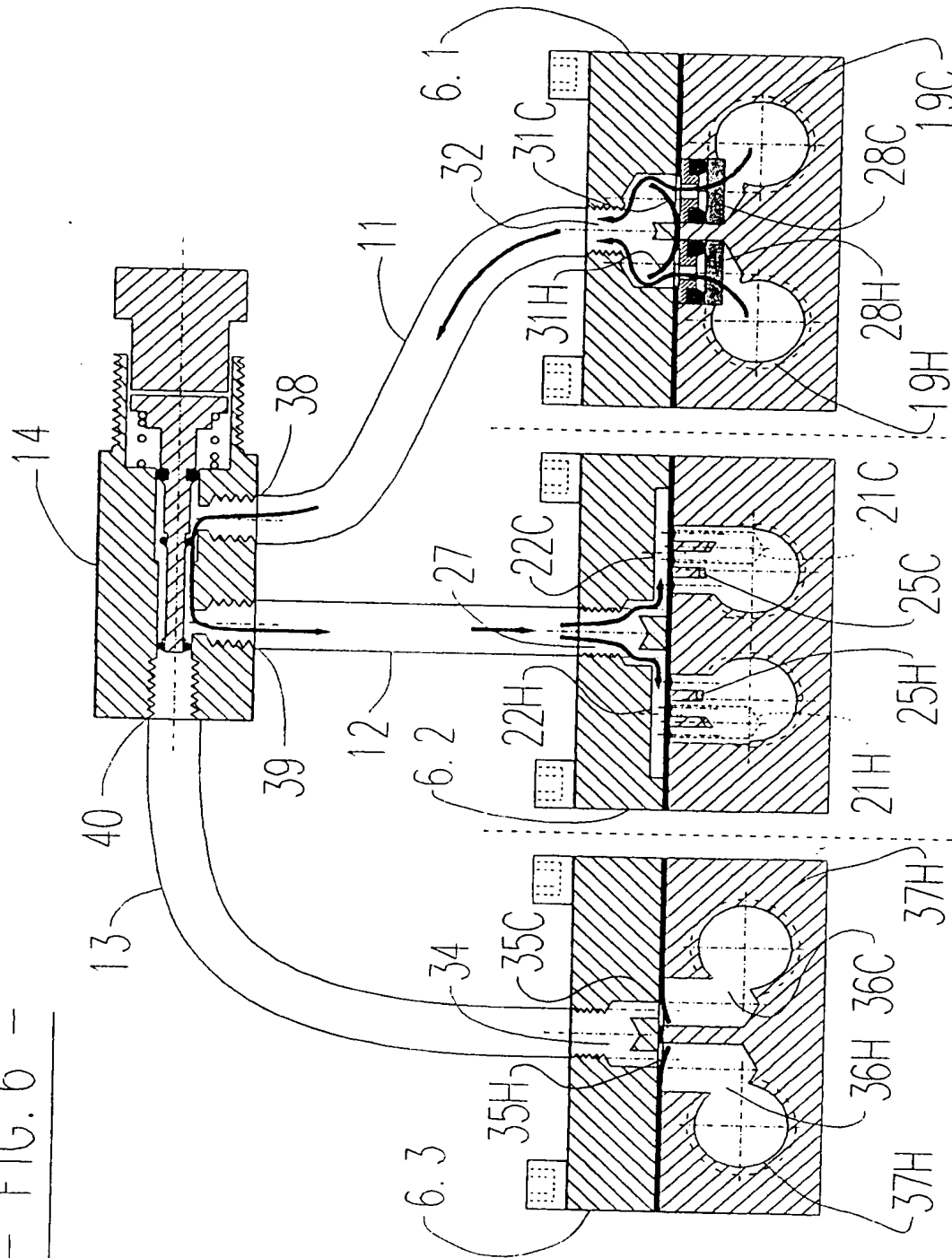
— FIG. 4 —

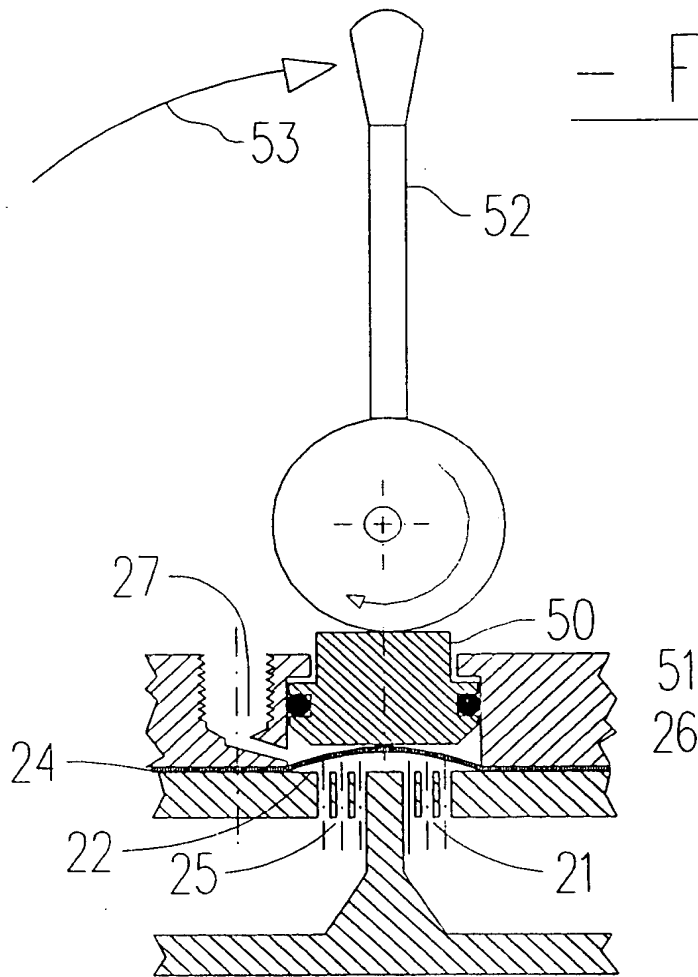




— FIG. 5 —

FIG. 6







European Patent
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 94 11 8318

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.6)
X	CH-A-583 392 (KUGLER FONDERIE ET ROBINETTERIE S.A.) * column 1, line 33 - column 2, line 49; figures 1,2 *	1,3,7,9,10	F16K31/62 F16K31/385
X	US-A-5 203 373 (AUSTIN, JR.) * column 6, line 1 - line 54; figure 1 *	1-4,7,10	
A	DE-A-21 41 712 (HANSA-METALLWERKE AG) * page 3, last paragraph - page 4; figure 2 *	1-7,10	
A	AU-D-1 386 976 (NYERS)		
A	FR-A-2 396 839 (BENTHOR BIBAUT)		
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.6)
			F16K
Place of search		Date of completion of the search	Examiner
THE HAGUE		28 February 1995	Christensen, J
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS			
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